



# 2004 Earth Day Report

## *Congresswoman Lois Capps*

Dear Friends,

Nowhere is it more appropriate to observe Earth Day than here on the South and Central Coasts, one of the most beautiful places in America. Earth Day holds particular significance for our community, because the concept was conceived after Senator Gaylord Nelson visited Santa Barbara to witness the devastating effects of the 1969 oil spill.

We have come a long way in the past thirty-five years. Our oceans, rivers, and lakes are cleaner, our parks and open spaces more vast. Yet much remains to be done. We need to increase our commitment to renewable and efficient energy, to keeping our air and drinking water clean and safe, and to protecting our natural resources from excessive development.

As we commemorate Earth Day, I want to take this opportunity to underscore my commitment to protecting our natural resources and inform you of my most recent actions in Congress.

*Lois Capps*

## ***Protecting Public Lands***

I have introduced The Los Padres National Forest Conservation Act to stop the U.S. Forest Service's proposal to open up additional lands in the Los Padres National Forest to oil and gas exploration. The opening of these spectacular, unspoiled lands to drilling threatens one of California's most pristine and wild places. New oil and gas development could damage the forest and its fragile habitat and destroy important unexplored archeological sites.



I am also working with Senator Boxer on legislation to protect California's remaining wild places. The areas we seek to protect would provide opportunities for camping, hiking, fishing, hunting, and horseback riding. Unfortunately, all of these wonderful activities are at risk by the continual threat of extractive industries and road development.

Working with county officials and environmental groups, I am seeking federal funds to complete the Matilija Dam Ecosystem Restoration Project. The massive build-up of sediment behind the dam is causing numerous environmental problems, including beach erosion and threats to steelhead trout. This funding will help ensure that the complete removal of the dam is carried out in a safe and environmentally sound manner. Removing Matilija will yield enormous ecological and economic benefits to the Central and South Coasts.

## ***Cleaning Our Water & Air***

I have introduced legislation to help clean up drinking water contaminated by MTBE – a gasoline additive that has leaked out of underground storage tanks. Currently, there are over 200 contaminated sites on the Central Coast, including serious levels of contamination in Oxnard and Cambria. I have also introduced legislation to speed establishment of a federal drinking water standard for perchlorate – a toxic chemical used in rocket fuel that has seeped into drinking water sources throughout the nation and poses a variety of serious health risks, especially in newborns, children and pregnant women.

I am putting pressure on the Bush Administration to grant California a waiver of the 2% gasoline oxygenate requirement. Waiving the oxygenate requirement in California is a common-sense measure that would reduce gas prices and improve our air quality. California has the technology to fulfill its Clean Air requirements by producing clean burning gasoline without federally mandated additives – like MTBE – that pollute our drinking water and drive the price of gas sky high.

## ***Stopping Offshore Oil***

I continue to urge the Bush Administration to follow the law and comply with a Federal court order giving California a veto over development of the 36 oil and gas leases off our coast. The Administration has delayed providing information about the leases to the California Coastal Commission for review. The State must be allowed to review the development plans of the 36 leases to determine whether or not they are consistent with California's coastal management program. It is only when the leases are terminated once and for all that our coast will be permanently protected from the threat of future oil drilling.

Recently, I called on the Administration to stop the discharge of pollution from oil platforms off our coast. Currently, twenty-two platforms off the Central Coast are discharging pollution into the ocean under expired permits. I support an earlier EPA proposal that included a stricter state water quality standard for discharges from the platforms. But the Administration rejected this proposal in favor of a new permit that will weaken our water quality standards. On the Central Coast we know the damage pollution can cause to our marine and coastal environment, and our local economy, which is so dependent on tourism and our beautiful coastline.

I have also introduced the Stop Oil Spills (S.O.S.) Act, a bill to speed up the phase-out of dangerous single-hulled oil tankers, replace them with safer ships, and create a 100-mile coastal safety zone. Recent events, like the sinking of the HMS Prestige off the Spanish coast, illustrate the danger of single-hull ships laden with toxic cargo. Enactment of the S.O.S. Act would greatly reduce the potential that a catastrophic oil spill would devastate our environment and economy.

***Congresswoman Lois Capps joins other elected and environmental leaders at a Santa Barbara event calling on the EPA to stop the discharge of pollution from offshore oil platforms.***



***For more information visit me at: [www.house.gov/capps](http://www.house.gov/capps)***



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